

Establishing Precinct Boundaries

Every ten years all communities in the Commonwealth are required to review population numbers from the Federal Census and submit a new precinct map for approval by the State. The Select Board begins by reviewing a draft of new boundary lines created by the Secretary of State and then proposes adjustments, if necessary. The Select Board votes to approve the final map and precinct descriptions and submits the final map by October 30, 2021. The draft maps prepared by the State require local input as the State's mapping algorithm focuses only on population numbers, and does not account for neighborhood make up. There is a link to Reprecincting information and the initial draft maps on the Elections Page at arlingtonma.gov/elections.

State law guidelines for drawing precinct boundaries

- Maximum 4,000 residents (no more than +/- 5% from the average precinct population)
- Compact geographically
- Consider race, income and other variables
- May not divide the underlying Census Block

State law regarding the number of Town Meeting Members

- As close to 240 as possible
- Each precinct elects a number divisible by 3 (12, 15, 18)
- (Ex $15 \times 16 = 240$, so we can't choose to have 18 members in 16 precincts)

Changing the Number of Precincts

The Town Clerk proposes that the Town reduce the number of precincts from 21 to 16 and maintain 8 polling locations. This means many voters will vote in the same location and will have a more uniform experience with each polling location hosting 2 precincts.

- Average population of each precinct would increase from about 2200 to 2900
- Number of Town Meeting Members (TMMs) would decrease from 252 to 240
- Precincts would elect 5 Town Meeting Members each year for 3-year terms

Why Would We Want Fewer Precincts?

By reducing the overhead of running elections, the Town will have more flexibility adapting procedures when there are changes in election laws. Adding resources for early voting and vote by mail and affect staffing needs:

- Spare tabulators would allow mailed ballots to be processed separately, reducing stress at the precincts when turnout is high
- Required staffing at 5 precincts would be exchanged for workers handling mailed ballots
- Increase in efficiency and adding services without significant cost increases is the goal

If We Keep 21 Precincts

Even if the number of precincts is not reduced, many of the boundaries will likely need to change this year as they have in the past (see chart on pg 3). When a precinct boundary changes, all members of Town Meeting from that precinct must be re-elected. All the residents in the newly-drawn precinct who wish to run go on the ballot and voters select up to 12 candidates. The top 4 candidates get 3-

year seats, the next 4 get 2-year seats and the final 4 get 1-year seats. This process is laid out in state law.

Information We Need from Residents

Residents can submit feedback, notes, paper maps or scans, and emails to the Town Clerk online, by drop box, mail or email to TownClerk@town.arlington.ma.us.

1) Identify area on the map that need further study regarding the impact of dividing or combining households or the potential for future growth. Feedback on the map is VITAL and applies no matter how many precincts we have.

- Neighborhoods on the map that should be looked at carefully can be circled
- Or written comments on demographic issues and concerns can be submitted

2) Feedback on changing the number of precincts and the impacts on voters and voting. There are pros and cons to various details that should be explored as a community. Change is challenging, but community discussions and feedback can lead to important insights the Town can apply in the future.

Things to think about

Possible polling locations

- Increasing the number of polling locations increases costs for each election
- Are there ways to assist with transportation to polling places that would reduce barriers for voters?

Impacts on Town Meeting

- Each voter gains 3 more TMMs from their precinct (15 instead of 12)
- The Town loses a total of 12 TMMs overall (252 reduces to 240)

The geographic area of precincts

- The area of each precinct increases which expands the pool of candidates for Town Meeting
- The number of residents in each precinct increases so TMMs have more people to meet
- Some precincts are already hard to walk (because they sprawl and/or are hilly)

The Reprecincting Working Group will aggregate all community feedback into revised precinct map alternatives. The alternative and all public comments will be shared with the Select Board to inform their decision.

Residents may submit feedback using of the methods listed below.

Online: [Google Form](#)

Email: TownClerk@town.arlington.ma.us

Mail: Town Clerk, 730 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA 02476

Drop Box: Town Hall drop boxes are located in front of the building or in the parking lot off Academy St.

Information about public forums and new versions of precincts maps will be posted with Reprecincting information on the Elections Page of the Town Website.

Information you may find interesting

The gray boxes indicate precincts affected the last two times Arlington redrew the boundaries.

2002 - 13 of 21 precincts had boundary changes							2012 - 15 of 21 precincts had boundary changes						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

Data on the number of precincts in other communities

Population	Town	Minimum No. Precincts	Actual No. Precincts	Residents/ Precinct
59000	Brookline	15	16	3688
57000	Medford	15	16	3563
56500	Plymouth	15	15	3767
43700	Arlington	11	21	2081
40000	Billerica	11	11	3636
36200	Natick	10	10	3620
33000	Andover	9	9	3667
32900	Watertown	9	12	2742
31300	N Andover	8	8	3913
31000	Lexington	8	9	3444
29500	Needham	8	10	2950
27500	Melrose	7	14	1964
27200	Milton	7	10	2720
25200	Belmont	7	8	3150
25200	Reading	7	8	3150
21900	Winchester	6	8	2738
21600	Stoneham	6	7	3086

Communities highlighted are ones we most often compare ourselves to – the Town Manager 12
Average number of Residents/Precinct in the Town Manager 12 without including Arlington = 3237